

Title - Stakeholders, Ethics and Social Responsibility

Keywords - Sustainable Development

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Activity - This example describes a session within a wider Corporate Planning module that develops students' awareness and understanding of the issues around corporate social responsibility, ethics and stakeholders in a business context.

Group - Level 3 students on the Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality programme at University of Gloucestershire.

Aim - The session aims to:

- introduce students to the concept of ethics in business;
- evaluate the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and analyse its drivers (for and against);
- examine the practical issues affecting the implementation of CSR.

Context / Background - The session forms an integral part within the Corporate Planning module, which addresses business policy issues, such as: strategic choice, re-engineering, cultural analysis, environmental factors and resource allocation, adopting a strategic, analytical approach to decision making within the Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality sectors. It addresses the module's learning outcomes relating to strategy evaluation and implementation and a synthesis of innovative approaches/solutions to strategic problems in the leisure/tourism/hospitality industries.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has only recently come to the fore as an emerging concept within the tourism industry with regard to developing sustainable tourism in international destinations. Sometimes, however, the theory of laudable principles can be far removed from the day-to-day practice of a busy tourism corporation. This session analyses the challenges of applying the theory of CSR to practice with the help of a tourism destination case study, introduced by video.

Example - The session is designed in a part-lecture, part-workshop format. This allows students to receive information about the principles of CSR, its background, definitions and theory; and to think more creatively about how these issues apply in a business context, including what the issues of implementing them might be for a range of different stakeholders.

The content includes discussion of:

- personal values and ethical behaviour;
- business ethics;
- the concept and principles of Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate accountability;
- stakeholder analysis and power;
- practical implementation of ethical behaviour and CSR within business in a particular tourism destination.

In order to reinforce their own thinking about these issues, students are required to participate in a number of activities, which are designed to prompt a wider consideration of the perspectives that need to be taken into account.

The first activity requires students to identify three personal, moral values that they think are important; then three ethical values that they would expect from a business; and then to consider what constitutes (un)ethical behaviour on the part of a business.

The purpose of this exercise is to:

- involve the students actively;
- draw from the students' own experience;
- highlight that ethics is not an academic concept, but starts with our own personal values, which we all bring to bear in our personal and public lives, including our work.

So, if one of our values is honesty, for example, is that something we would expect from a business? Would we expect to be treated with honesty as a consumer or as an employee? If that is not the case, however, why do we tolerate it, should we tolerate it? What happens in the transition between personal values and business values? The discussion then leads into some practical experiences of business behaviour and the contradictions and dilemmas we encounter in our daily decision-making at work or in the business world.

The students are encouraged to look critically at the corporate social responsibility sections of major corporations' websites, eg Nike, international hotel chains and tour operators. This demonstrates the significance that is now placed on this aspect by real businesses, and the level of commitment which international corporations, in particular, are required to make to ethical practice.

Finally, the students are shown a video about tourism in The Gambia. The UK package tour operator First Choice, which the module tutor has personal experience of, is introduced as a case study of a company that aims to practice CSR and implement a sustainable tourism policy. It aims to minimise its negative impact on destinations and maximise its positive contribution to local people and destination governments, whilst increasing customer satisfaction. The exercise is specifically related to the company's activity in The Gambia. If First Choice was to implement CSR in the Gambia it would, first of all, have to carry out a stakeholder analysis and identify their issues in

relation to the company's impact. The students are asked to identify the stakeholders involved in this example, and to assess their relative power (5 minutes). They are then asked to consider what issues each stakeholder group might have with First Choice's activity in the country, and what strategies, if any, the company should adopt in response to these issues (10 minutes).

The students work in pairs or groups depending on the size and venue of the group. After the allocated time, their work is then drawn out into a class activity and discussion.

The purpose of this exercise is to:

- Encourage critical, analytical and strategic thinking, applying theory to practice;
- Raise awareness of the complexity of the issues in tourism destinations, particularly developing countries;
- Raise awareness of the complexity of the decision-making process for a tourism company and the implications that have to be considered in developing a CSR strategy.

Overall, the session highlights a wide range of issues related to ethics, stakeholders and CSR. Links are made between individual values and morals, and the activities of large, multinational corporations, demonstrating the significance that these issues have within the corporate planning context and its practical application.

Results/ Feedback - Very positive feedback has been received. One student commented that it was the best session she had had for some time. Staff have found it very rewarding because the students become actively involved, and the issues discussed are directly relevant not only to practical application of management processes, but also to students' personal development. In future, I would like to focus more on the case study and discussions, and less on the theoretical arguments.

The session is too short to cover business ethics in detail. Electronic tools could be used for the theoretical content. The aspects of practical application and the discussion make the lecturer's presence more valuable.

Further information - The lack of educational videos and other visual and non-visual learning tools is noticeable in this area. I would be glad to collaborate with other colleagues to develop such materials.

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